



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Branch of Fire Management
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Fire Restores Rare Desert Marsh

Pahranagat National Wildlife Refuge, Southern NV - Refuge firefighters completed a burn to remove encroaching cattails and bullrush on this rare marsh within the Southern Nevada desert. The project removed the invasive species and restored habitat for a variety of migratory waterfowl. The refuge, consisting of marsh and desert uplands, hosts over 200 bird species.



Crews at Pahranagat National Wildlife Refuge use prescribed fire to restore essential wetlands for migrating waterfowl. (USFWS)



Firefighters conduct a prescribed burn of invasive salt cedar at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. (USFWS)

Prescribed Fire Fights Persistent Salt Cedar in New Mexico

Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, Socorro, NM - Salt cedar or "tamarisk," is an invasive species that has taken over vast areas of the Southwest and has become a severe fire hazard. Many refuges are undertaking efforts to restore these areas to native vegetation, in order to reduce wildfire potential and improve the habitat for numerous wildlife species. Crews at Bosque del Apache NWR mechanically removed 343 acres of the invasive species last year, completing a project begun in 2001. The final burn of the piled salt cedar was accomplished with the assistance of firefighters from nearby refuges, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service. The Forest Service's Rocky Mountain Research Station and the University of New Mexico continue to assist monitoring the project to help refine future treatments.

"This burn will provide important information for developing strategies to reduce salt cedar, including preparation techniques, burning parameter limits and expected fire behavior, control problems, fire effects, and input for smoke management," said Shaun Sanchez, Assistant Refuge Manager.

Restoring Savanna in Wisconsin

Necedah National Wildlife Refuge, Necedah, WI - Since the late 1990's, fire managers on this refuge have been systematically thinning highly flammable jack pine, restoring about 900 acres so far of globally imperiled oak savannah, while reducing the high fire risk to surrounding communities. Harvested wood is being sold for saw logs and pulp wood in local markets. Timber sales contracts will be used to restore an additional 1900 acres. The project has helped recover rare wildlife species, more than doubling the habitat of the endangered Karner blue butterfly and increasing the diversity of bird, mammals, and plants. The restored area has become host to at least two wolf packs and Wisconsin's largest population of red-headed woodpeckers.

Chemical Treatment and Fire Reduce Weeds

Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge, Milton, DE - This refuge is using herbicides and prescribed fire to control several thousand-acres of phragmites, a non-native, invasive tall grass that inhabits brackish and freshwater marshes, ditches, and dredge spoil areas. In March 2002, a 1,500-acre arson fire burned through the flammable phragmites, threatening homes along Slaughter Beach and Primehook Beach. The combined herbicide / prescribed fire treatments are reducing risk to these homes and restoring native plants.

"This Wildland Urban Interface project at Prime Hook is a great example of how it 'should be done' with cooperation, networking and science," said Art Latterell, National Fire Plan Coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Fire Controls Weeds and Restores Wetlands

Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge and False Cape State Park, VA - Firefighters from three national wildlife refuges in Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware used drip torches and a unique marsh-adapted vehicle to ignite a fast-moving burn of about 400 acres of underbrush, to control invasive phragmites reeds and restore wetlands for migrating and wintering fowl. The 15-foot tall reeds choke out nutritious native plants, which support a variety of ducks, geese, and swans. After a similar burn three years ago, two thousand snow geese flocked to the burned areas of the refuge and the park.

Weed Removal Protects City, Improves Ecosystem

Salt Lake County, UT - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service fire staff completed a 56-acre hazardous fuels reduction project next to the Utah field office of the Regional Ecological Services Unit. The area is located on the edge of a "superfund" site from past steel production and had accumulated an abundance of tamarack and Russian olive vegetation over the years. This fuel build-up became a concern due to its proximity with the Salt Lake City metro area. The project involved multi-agency cooperation from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Utah Reclamation, Mitigation and Conservation Commission, Great Salt Lake Audubon Society, TreeUtah, West Jordan City, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"Not only did the project reduce the excessive fuel loading in the area, it also removed invasive species and improved the hydrology of the Jordan River," said FWS biologist Christine Cline, a specialist in environmental contaminants issues.

To learn more about The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's fire program, visit

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For information about the Service's efforts in managing invasive species, visit

<http://invasives.fws.gov>